

DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

news release

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

For Release

November 14, 1968

Carroll 343-5634

INTERIOR, AGRICULTURE DEPARTMENTS PLAN PROTECTION OF BALD EAGLES IN SOUTHEAST ALASKA

The Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife, Department of the Interior, and the Forest Service, Department of Agriculture, have signed an agreement to insure greater protection for bald eagles of southeast Alaska, where the largest numbers of this species live.

The announcement was made today by Secretary of the Interior Stewart L. Udall and Secretary of Agriculture Orville L. Freeman.

In a joint statement, the two secretaries said: "The agreement is the most significant conservation measure for our national symbol in Alaska since the Bald Eagle Act was applied to that state in 1959." This act, passed in 1940, made shooting of bald eagles a Federal offense.

Terms of the agreement will be carried out through the regional forester for the Forest Service and the game management agent-in-charge for Sport Fisheries and Wildlife. Both are stationed in Juneau.

The major feature of the agreement is the close cooperation of the two agencies in protecting nest trees in areas where timber sales, road construction or other operations by man are planned. Sport Fisheries and Wildlife will locate and mark all eagle nesting trees within and adjacent to eagle nesting areas. And the Forest Service will include clauses and specifications in timber sale contracts and special use permits to protect nest trees from destruction.

The population of nesting bald eagles in southeast Alaska was estimated by Sport Fisheries and Wildlife at between 10,000 and 15,000 after a survey of nests in 1966. The total number of bald eagles is unknown.

Only 2,772 were counted in the 48 contiguous States in a wildlife study conducted earlier this year.

Southeast Alaska offers some of the most desirable bald eagle habitat with its 13,000 miles of salt water shoreline and its rain forests of Sitka spruce and western hemlock in the lower elevations.

During the 1966 survey, almost all bald eagle nests were located within 200 yards of salt water or along major mainland rivers.

Although this area has not yet been extensively marred by man, it has not been untouched. Between 1785 and 1910, sea otters were exterminated in southeast Alaska. Salmon fishing began about 1878, and a decline in stocks began to be noticed during World War II. In recent years, pesticides have been used in a few isolated areas.

Bounty hunting, too, once menaced the bald eagle. Alaska was paying \$2 per bird when the bounty system was rescinded by the territorial legislature in 1952. Annual reports of the Alaskan territorial treasurer showed that 128,273 bald eagles were killed and presented for bounty from 1917 to 1952.

x x x

10592-68